

Objections to the proposed statute for admitting women to the examinations for the degree of Bachelor of Medicine.

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With Professor Case's Comments
OBJECTIONS

TO

THE PROPOSED STATUTE

FOR

ADMITTING WOMEN

TO

THE EXAMINATIONS

FOR THE

DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF MEDICINE.



Printed by Parker and Co.

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1890

CONTENTS.

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| 1. It is to some extent unnecessary to admit women to the first Examination in Medicine, as well as to the School of Natural Science | 3 |
| 2. It is not proper to admit women to any medical examinations in a University of men | 4 |
| 3. The proposed Statute neglects the safeguards of Classical Responsions | 5 |
| 4. The proposed Statute neglects the safeguards provided by the degree of B.A. | 7 |
| 5. The proposed Statute provides no formula of certificate applicable to women | 9 |
| 6. The effect of the Statute will be to prejudge the question of female doctors | 9 |

Objections, &c.

ON Tuesday, June 17, at two o'clock, there will be promulgated in Congregation a Statute, which marks a new departure, or rather a revolution, in the Examination of Women by the University of Oxford. It is proposed to admit women to the Examinations for the Degree of Bachelor of Medicine (cf. Statt. Tit. vi. Sect. v.), which are as follows :—

First Examination—

Organic Chemistry.
Human Anatomy.
Human Physiology.

Second Examination—

Medicine.
Surgery.
Midwifery.
Pathology.
Forensic Medicine and Public Health.
Materia Medica and Pharmacy.

There are so many objections to this proposal, that I venture to ask Congregation to reject it next Tuesday.

1. *It is to some extent unnecessary to admit Women to the first Examination in Medicine, as well as to the School of Natural Science.*

By Statt. Tit. viii. Sect. i. § 3. cl. 3 (p. 169, ed. 1889) women are already allowed to use all the University Examinations in the School of Natural Science. As either Chemistry or Physiology, taken



in the School of Natural Science, is by the Statutes a substitute for the corresponding parts of the First Examination in Medicine (Statt. Tit. vi. Sect. v. § 2. cl. 2), and as women can in that School become candidates either in Chemistry, or in Anatomy, or in Physiology, they have already some opportunity of being examined in the Sciences, which form the subjects of the First Examination for the Degree of Bachelor of Medicine. To some extent, then, the proposed Statute is unnecessary.

2. It is not proper to admit Women to any Medical Examinations in a University of Men.

In the Examinations for the Degree of Bachelor of Medicine, while it is not absolutely necessary to admit women to some parts, there are other parts from which it is necessary to exclude them. Passages might be quoted from the Regulations of the Board of the Faculty (Examination Statutes, pp. 155-9, ed. 1889); but it will be in better taste to earnestly beg members of Congregation to read them for themselves, on account of the very point, which they prove, namely that the study of medicine, like the diseases with which it deals, cannot but be an unsavoury business.

I do not say that women, especially nurses, ought to be ignorant of medicine: I do say that no woman ought to study the anatomy and the physiology, the pathology and the abuses of the propagation of the species, in a University of men. I do not say that a University of women might not contain a medical faculty: I do say that Oxford is not a University of women. I do not say that midwives should not be as thoroughly trained as

doctors: I do say that a University for young men is the last place on earth for midwives. If women are to study medicine in Oxford, they will have, in the midst of young men at the Museum and the Infirmary, to investigate those delicate matters which are of the very essence of medicine. If they are to be examined in Oxford, they will, by the necessary Regulations of the Faculty, in addition to papers, be obliged to undertake practical work and oral examination in subjects about which it is difficult even to write. The very existence of such a class of young women, and much more their intercourse with young men, will increase the difficulty of dealing with the relation of the sexes in this place. It is a return to a State of Nature^a.

3. *The proposed Statute neglects the Safeguards of Classical Responsions.*

This objectionable Statute undertakes the delicate task of opening Medical Examinations to women in a most careless manner. Instead of prescribing beforehand by Statute safeguards, which are highly necessary in the circumstances, it leaves all the arrangements to the Delegates of Local Examinations. The policy of this body is evident from its existing Regulations about the Examinations for Women, which have deserted the principles of the University, by making Latin and Greek purely voluntary, by making Moderations and Literæ Humaniores both voluntary and equivalent Ex-

^a I know the common answer, but would reply by adding what the experience of life, and the literature of the day, shew to be a necessary qualification of too absolute a maxim. To the pure all things are pure: but how many are the pure? Yet Statutes are meant for whole classes.

aminations in Classics, and by requiring no residence whatever. The Delegates have, in short, made *a* University within, or rather by the side of, *the* University. Yet, in the present proposal, we are to be asked not only to "authorize the Delegates of Local Examinations to make arrangements for using the Examinations for the Degree of Bachelor of Medicine for the Examination of Women," in spite of the extraordinary arrangements they have made about other Examinations, but also, and for the first time, to endorse their previous policy in one of its fundamental innovations, the alternatives for Responsions. The proposed Statute requires women to have passed "Responsions or some Examination which is in the judgment of the Delegates equivalent to Responsions." These are excessive powers, allowed to a small and secret Committee, of determining the character of the women, who are to be admitted to all University Examinations. Now, the existing Regulations of the Delegates about Examinations for Women equivalent to Responsions show clearly that they are far more loose than the Regulations of the University itself about men. The Delegates allow women to be examined in French or Italian and German instead of Latin and Greek. The Delegates further excuse from Responsions and from any Examination, equivalent to Responsions, women who are "Members of the Association of Collegiate Alumnæ (U. S. A.)." Under these Regulations, women but little trained beforehand, and foreign women, can become candidates for Honours in the Public Examinations of the University. If then Congregation should pass the present Statute, it

will put the University in the inconsistent and untenable position of being most particular what young men come through the narrow path of Responsions, and most careless about the broad way of women to all the Honour Examinations of the University. Absurd as this policy would be in general, it is most serious with a view to a Medical Examination, to which, if women ought to be admitted at all, they ought to be admitted after a most careful selection.

4. *The proposed Statute neglects the Safeguards provided by the Degree of B.A.*

The proposed Statute has its errors of omission, as well as of commission. It preserves a curious and ominous silence about the status of a woman, in relation to the Degrees, on the one hand of Bachelor of Arts, and on the other hand of Bachelor of Medicine. The status of a man in similar circumstances is clear enough from the opening words of the Statute of the Times and Exercises required for Degrees in Medicine (Statt. vi. Sect. v. § 1.)—"Any person who has been admitted to the Degree of Bachelor of Arts may supplicate for the Degree of Bachelor of Medicine, provided that he shall have passed the Examinations hereinafter prescribed."

This provision has the advantage of obliging a man to become a Bachelor of Arts, before he can become a Bachelor of Medicine. It is true that as a mere matter of convenience he may pass the medical examinations before he actually takes the former degree, but the former degree is necessary to the latter, and in the case of a man the degree is the point. The practical consequence is that the University, having taken care to select its men by

a Classical Examination in Responsions, further takes care to give those selected men a fairly general education, and to bring them under the moral influence of Alma Mater by a residence of 12 terms (cf. *Statt. Tit. vi. Sect. 1. § 1*), in order that they may graduate in Arts, before they proceed to the special and profoundly responsible degree in Medicine.

The very first words of the Statute of the Times and Exercises required for Degrees in Medicine are inapplicable to a woman, because she is inadmissible to the degree of Bachelor of Arts. What, then, has she to do with an Examination the whole aim of which is to raise a selected and developed man from one degree to another degree? Being inadmissible to either degree, she would escape the safeguards which control the ascent of a man from the Degree of Bachelor of Arts to the Degree of Bachelor of Medicine. She needs no Latin and Greek, she need not reside, she need not pass both a First and a Second Public Examination. Consequently, there is nothing in the proposed Statute to prevent a strange woman, coming from the Collegiate Alumnæ of the United States to Oxford, escaping Responsions, evading all residence except a few days to pass the preliminary examinations (which will be found in the *Examination Statutes*, p. 148 and note, ed. 1889), and then, at once and without delay, proceeding to the examinations for the Degree of Bachelor of Medicine. Is a man so inferior to a woman, that he requires 3 years, and she no residence at all, to become qualified for the special study of Medicine? If Congregation should pass this Statute, it will commit the University to

denying for women the principle which it has always affirmed for men : *No Residence, No Education.*

5. *The proposed Statute provides no formula of Certificate applicable to Women.*

It will be said that the proposed Statute says nothing about the relation of women to Degrees, because it merely contemplates their receiving certificates. But it preserves an equally curious and ominous silence about these certificates. Perhaps, as it is intended to insert the proposed Statute after Statt. Tit. viii. Sect. 1. § 3. cl. 4 (p. 170, not 169, ed. 1889), the framers of the Statute were misled by a fancied analogy between music and medicine. But the cases are quite different. A woman is at present admitted only to the first Examination for the Degree of Bachelor in Music (Statt. Tit. viii. Sect. 1., § 3. cl. 4), and simply receives the statutory certificate, "Quæstionibus de Elementis Artis Musicæ pro forma respondit." But the two medical examinations confer much more imposing certificates. They both begin with the words, "pro gradu Baccalaurei in Medicina et pro gradu Baccalaurei in Chirurgia prout Statuta requirunt examinatus, &c." As women are excluded from these Degrees and therefore cannot be examined for them, they ought not to receive these certificates, and the proposed Statute ought to have contained a formula for certificates applicable to women, who are to be examined in medicine, but not for the Degree.

6. *The effect of the Statute will be to prejudice the question of Female Doctors.*

The Delegates of Local Examinations will perhaps, though *ultra vires*, invent certificates. But

now arises a still greater difficulty, and one which ought of itself to prevent Congregation from passing the proposed Statute. What will be the practical consequence of giving women certificates of having passed the University Examinations in Medicine? In Oxford, it will precipitate the question of women's Degrees, because it will soon be made to appear ridiculous that women should be examined as if they were between two Degrees, without having either of them. But, whatever may be its future solution, I submit that the whole problem of women's Degrees ought at any rate to be decided on its own merits and not on a side issue.

It is not, however, the effect of the proposed Statute in Oxford so much as its effect in the outside world, about which we should be most solicitous. It will become notorious that women, though they have not the names of Bachelors and Doctors of Medicine, have real certificates of having passed the examinations required by the University. To a man, the certificate without the Degree would be of little value; but to a woman it will stand in the place of the Degree. It will make her a practitioner in medicine, authorized by the University of Oxford. She will put it in practice. She will plead that her certificate, obtained in the same Examinations, is as good a title as a man's degree, to a place in the Medical Register.

Now, there are two fundamental objections to making women into doctors by this simple process. In the first place, the University, which, as I have shown throughout this protest, merely examines women, without selecting and educating them, would

be guilty of the most culpable levity if it pretended, or seemed, as it undoubtedly would to the outside world seem, to pretend to be sending into the medical profession certificated women as carefully prepared as selected and educated Bachelors of Arts and Medicine. Secondly, it would be unwise, undignified, and even impertinent, in a University of many scholars but few doctors, to force the question of female doctors in this country. This is a question which ought, like every other question, to be decided by those who know. Oxford ought never to give women medical certificates amounting to medical degrees, except after consultation and in co-operation with the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Surgeons.

But it is well known that these royal, representative and national Colleges, which have had all the facts before them, have deliberately declined to grant their diplomas to women. Moreover, although there are other means of access to the Medical Register, it is, to say the least, questionable whether women have as yet given sufficient proof of their competence as practitioners to justify the University in risking the dignity of its name on a premature experiment. When the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Surgeons have closed the main avenues, it is not for Oxford to open a backdoor for women to the medical profession.

In short, if women ought to receive medical certificates of any kind, it ought to be done in harmony with the highest medical authority; and in order that they may deserve these certificates, they ought to be as carefully selected, and as

generally educated, as men are for the Degrees of Arts and Medicine. But, if all these preliminary conditions were satisfied, Oxford would not be the place to satisfy them. It is not only unnecessary, but positively improper to initiate, educate, or examine young women in the essentially delicate subject of disease and medicine, surrounded by young men in a University of Men.

THOMAS CASE.

13 *June*, 1890.

